

**Governor's Proposed FY23 Budget Adjustments**  
**Appropriations Hearing**  
**HB 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**  
**Thursday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan, Representative Nolan, Senator Miner, Representative France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Catherine Parker and I am a registered voter in the city of Bridgeport. I am a member of Bridge House, a psychosocial day program for individuals with mental health conditions. I am on the Coordinating Council of Keep the Promise Coalition, and a Resident of Areyto Supportive Housing.

I have suffered most of my life because of mental illness. I say suffering because that's my truth, no matter how I try to hide it. I was first diagnosed at the age of 15. I am a product of severe and prolonged childhood trauma beginning at a very young age. I have attempted suicide many times in my life. I have also been chronically homeless throughout my life, beginning at the age of fourteen, a time when DCF did not exist.

The reason I am sharing this is because I feel you need to know just how significantly mental health services provided through the DMHAS budget are saving lives. Being a member of Bridge House has changed my life in very significant ways. I am valued regardless of my diagnosis. The work I do there is important. The things I want to learn but have not mastered yet is patiently taught to me by either staff or by being paired up with another member. I am empowered not only to dream, but to dream big.

When I came to Bridge House in 2008, I was homeless, but fortunately they had a very kind and knowledgeable housing coordinator. I was also introduced to Keep the Promise and advocacy. Because of KTP I found my voice, and I learned how to use it intelligently and effectively. Most importantly, not only was I given a platform to use this voice but I have found my purpose. I found a purpose to bring about change, when I thought my purpose was to endure silent and isolated suffering.

These are some of the many reasons I ask you to increase the mental health budget. I leave you with one question. If I was someone you loved what price would you pay for my healing, knowing

that mental health services would be the best chance of increasing the quality of my life? Thank you.